

# **SRIMADBHAGAVADGITA**

**Summary on  
Seventeenth Chapter  
by  
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## SUMMARY (SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER)

- Note: 1. Portions in brackets are supplied ideas.  
2. Numbers in brackets indicate the verses.

In the previous chapter, *Bhagavān* said that *śāstra* is the *pramāṇa* in determining what is right and wrong and that one should act according to what *śāstra* says. Based on this, *Arjuna* raises a question here — “To what category does a person belong if he worships with faith without scriptural knowledge — sattvic, rajasic, or tamasic?” (1)

*Kṛṣṇa* answers that he may belong to any category according to his temperament. An ignorant person’s faith will depend on his nature since he has no scriptural knowledge to guide. (By observing various types of worship done by others, he develops his faith according to his character. On the other hand, a person who goes by the scriptural teaching will invariably have sattvic faith) (2, 3).

*Kṛṣṇa* differentiates three types of faith based upon the object of worship (4). Even the nature of worship varies according to faith. People of tamasic faith take to severe practices involving torture of the body etc. (5, 6).

Having answered *Arjuna*’s question, *Kṛṣṇa* discusses a few more topics namely food, *yajña*, *tapas*, and charity, differentiating them into three types based on the *guṇas* (7 to 22). (Refer the chart.) [A seeker has to choose the sattvic type i.e. *daivī-sampat* and avoid rajasic and tamasic types i.e. *āsuri-sampat*.]

*Bhagavān* concludes the teaching mentioning the significance of the *mantra* “*Om tat sat*”. This originated from *Brahmā*’s mouth in the beginning of the creation, and has been traditionally chanted during scriptural activities like *yajña*, *tapas*, and *dāna*. The word ‘*sat*’ has many meanings like existence, goodness, good action, steadfastness and an action as an offering to the Lord (23 to 27).

TOPIC	SATTVIC	RAJASIC	TAMASIC
<i>Śraddhā</i> (Faith)	Worship of the gods. (4)	Worship of the <i>yakṣas</i> and the <i>rākṣasas</i> . (4)	Worship of spirits and ghosts. (4)
<i>Āhāra</i> (Food)	That which is delicious, which gives longevity, health, strength, and happiness. (8)	That which is excessively bitter, sour, salty, hot, pungent, and which causes pain. (9)	That which is improperly cooked, without nutrition, putrid, stale, left over, and impure.
<i>Yajña</i> (Sacrifice)	That which is sincerely done according to the scriptural injunctions, without expecting any result. (11)	That which is done for the sake of show and for the sake of result. (12)	That which is done without rules, faith, <i>mantra</i> , <i>dakṣiṇā</i> , or food-distribution. (13)
<i>Dānam</i> (Charity)	That which is sincerely given to a deserving person at the proper time and place without expecting any return. (20)	That which is reluctantly given for the sake of return and result. (21)	That which is given without respect to an undeserving person at an improper time and place. (22)

*Kṛṣṇa* divides tapas on the basis of the *guṇas* and also on the basis of the instrument as given below:

### TAPAS (Austerity)

SATTVIC	RAJASIC	TAMASIC
That which is practised with faith and without expecting any result. (17)	That which is practised for the sake of show, name, and fame. (18)	That which is practised with false notions and bodily torture for harming others. (19)
<b>KĀYIKAM</b> (Physical)	<b>VĀCIKAM</b> (Verbal)	<b>MĀNASAM</b> (Mental)
Worship of gods, brahmins, elders and wisemen as well as purity, self-control, and nonviolence. (14)	Words which are harmless, truthful, pleasing, and beneficial as well as scriptural study. (15)	Tranquillity, gentleness, mind-control, and purity of heart. (16)

[In essence the utterance of this *mantra* will sanctify scriptural actions and make them sattvic.]

In the last verse, *Kṛṣṇa* emphasizes the importance of *śraddhā* (faith). Without faith all scriptural activities become *asat*, i.e. fruitless (28).

The topics of this chapter are:

1. *Arjuna*'s question and three types of *śraddhā* ..... 1 to 6
2. *Kṛṣṇa* introduces new topics ..... 7
3. Three types of food ..... 8 to 10
4. Three types of *yajña* ..... 11 to 13
5. Three types of *tapas* (based on instrument) ..... 14 to 16
6. Three types of *tapas* (based on *guṇa*) ..... 17 to 19
7. Three types of charity ..... 20 to 22
8. Significance of “*om tat sat*” and conclusion ..... 23 to 28

Since *śraddhā* is highlighted both in the beginning and in the end, this chapter is called *Śraddhātrayavibhāga-yoga*.

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